

BIOSOLIDS EXPERT PANEL

Health Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes

Date: January 23, 2008

Location: Albemarle County Dept. of Fire Rescue, 25 Mill Creek Drive, Charlottesville, VA

Panel Members Present:

- **Dr. Alan Rubin**, consultant (principal Envirostrategies, LLC)
- **Barry Dunkley**, City of Danville
- **Karen Pallansch**, Alexandria Sanitation Authority
- **Henry Staudinger**, Citizen representative
- **Dr. Robert Hale**, Virginia Institute of Marine Science
- **Dr. Howard Kator**, Virginia Institute of Marine Science
- **Dr. W. Lee Daniels**, Virginia Tech Department of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences
- **Scott P. Johnson**, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- **Dr. Ralph O. Allen**, University of Virginia School of Medicine
- **Dr. Greg Evanylo**, Virginia Tech Department of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences
- **Dr. Susan Fischer-Davis**, Virginia Department of Health
- **Dr. Mark Levine**, Virginia Department of Health
- **Dr. Robert Call**, Medical practitioner
- **Anita Tuttle sat in for Russ Baxter**, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

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Supporting staff present:

- **Jeff Corbin**, Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources
- **Angela Neilan**, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- **Ann Regn**, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- **Neil Zahradka**, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- **Christina Wood**, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- **Robert Hicks**, Virginia Department of Health

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Minutes

Assistant Secretary of Natural Resources Jeff Corbin brought the meeting to order at 2:50 p.m.

The panel voted to approve the minutes from the October 24, 2007 Health Workgroup meeting.

Angela Neilan read through a brief threaded conversation summary of the previous Health Subcommittee Meetings.

Ms. Neilan then posed Jeff Corbin's question to the three panel member that joined the group after lunch – What three things would you like to see in the Biosolids Program, i.e. what needs to be changed or addressed?

Dr. Susan Fischer-Davis

- Improve the capacity to respond to individuals exposed to biosolids.

Dr. Mark Levine

- More DEQ interaction with the neighbors during the permitting process – involve more people than just the landowner.
- Provide better response to complaints.
- Ensure that a better product is being applied.

Dr. Robert Call

- Evaluate the individual complaints – this may be the only way to keep up with new components showing up in the sludge.
- What is the recourse of patients with problems?
- Communication – DEQ should take a proactive approach.

Angela Neilan will consolidate the list and send it to the panel members.

Action Item: the Panel Members are to prioritize the items.

Mr. Zahradka reported that Dr. Allen of UVA and Dr. Vance of VCU had decided that they would not have their medical students conduct surveys of patients affected by biosolids and compile their stories. They would need to apply to the universities' Institutional Review Boards before conducting research involving humans. The Drs. believed that the time required to obtain approval to conduct the study would leave little time to conduct the study before the Panel's meeting deadline of November 30, 2008. There were also concerns about the interview protocol and privacy issues.

A general discussion followed. A citizen commented that she believed such a study would give you a good feel for the type of ailments being reported and that you may begin to see a pattern. Dr. Hale stated that it would be bad to conduct a bad survey; the public would be hoping to gain information from it, but the data would not be conclusive. He suggested that Dr. Steve Wing at UNC is in the process of composing a survey. Dr. Fischer-Davis believes that Dr. Wing has IRB approval at UNC and the survey is designed for National use, and suggested that the survey be conducted on behalf of the panel, not requiring IRB approval from UVA or VCU. However the

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survey is not complete at this time. It was brought up that VDH had records of complaints. It was concluded that DEQ needs to do a better job documenting and tracking complaints. One citizen suggested testing the air, soil and water before and after the land application of biosolids. Dr. Kator noted that complaints of illness in the vicinity of biosolids application are received, but it has not been determined that the illnesses were due to the biosolids. Mr. Johnson added that complaints should lead to further study.

Dr. Hale proposed that these questions be considered when looking at complaint data:

1. What are the most common symptoms?
2. Who is the generator of the biosolids?
3. What type of land application was used, i.e. tilled, surface, etc.

Dr. Levine said that the intent of the study should be to serve as ground level activity leading to epidemiological studies. He acknowledged that this is a long term project that will not be done before the panel has completed its task, but that the data that already exists needs to be collected.

EPA and WERF have recognized that the number one concern of citizens is human health, but they want to see cause and effect.

Mr. Staudinger said that as a citizen he did not interpret that citizens wanted specific answers from the proposed survey, but they just saw the survey as a first step.

General discussion – we should use the data that we already have and ensure that we have a mechanism for future collection of data. We need to look at the information gaps. Dr. Call said that we need to determine if there is an existing database and modify or set up a new system as needed. Dr. Evanylo said that the database needs to be precisely defined. Mr. Zahradka added that DEQ is bound by the statute to maintain a searchable electronic database to collect health complaints. DEQ is working to ensure that we are collecting valuable information. Dr. Call said “Let’s Wing it”, that we need to put something into effect right now. Dr. Levine asked if the Panel could come to an agreement to look at the Wing survey. Dr. Evanylo said that the study needs to be entered without bias and that we need to consider the pathways, i.e. aerosols, runoff, etc. What can be done in the permitting phase to address the potential to get ill from biosolids – provide something like “informed consent” in medicine?

Motion to look at the Wing Survey. Seconded.

Can we tie into the VDH and national complaint database? VDH has a list of all biosolids related health complaints posted on their website. Mr. Hicks of VDH recommended contacting the local health directors; they are medical doctors, ask if they believe that the illness was biosolids related. Dr Call asked if just getting a general number of health complaints was good for now. Is this a good source; or are people afraid to report illnesses?

Dr. Rubin emphasized the use of the terms “undocumented” and “no association” when putting together a list of complaints.

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The system needs to be improved. Look at pre and post exposure. Use permitting and buffers to minimize exposure. Look at the Endotoxin issue.

Citizen Comments

None

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 23, 2008.

Angela Neilan adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.